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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [DR](#) [EAGR](#) [ETRD](#) [CAFTA](#)

SUBJECT: DOMINICAN REPUBLIC: CERTIFICATION OF FIRST MANGO
TREATMENT FACILITY

[11.](#) (Summary) On June 4, 2005, USDA/APHIS certified the first mango hot water treatment (HWT) facility in the Dominican Republic (DR). On June 9, the first shipment of mangoes was successfully exported to New York, under the supervision of an APHIS TDY Officer as part of an APHIS Preclearance (PC) Program. Export of mangoes was one of the Dominican Republic's goals for the free trade agreement (CAFTA)(para 9). APHIS provided fruit fly (FF) trapper training to allow the Secretaria de Estado de Agricultura (SEA) to comply with the requirements of the PC Program Work Plan to include only growers who are certified from Low FF Prevalence Areas to participate in the PC Program. All APHIS costs for the program have been funded by the HWT facility owner. The Dominican Secretary of Agriculture toured the treatment facility on June 10, 2005.

Certification Tests

[12.](#) During April 2005, the HWT facility ran two preliminary tests. During the week of May 23, 2005 two APHIS experts visited the facility, but were not able to certify the facility. There were a multitude of issues to address - including the circulation in the tank and between the crates, set-point equipment (which has been replaced), the recording device (needed to be modified), slow reaction of the hot water heater to a drop in temperatures, calibration of the setpoint and stationary sensors in the tank, and a lack of the automatic starting sensor for the recorder. There was a list of smaller items to attend to as well. The test run on Wednesday, however, was quite close to meeting the temperature/time requirements using mobile sensors.

[13.](#) The facility owners addressed the issues, including a retrofit of the tank and basket for guidance into the tank so that when the basket is dropped, the electronic sensor will work 100 percent of the time. This sensor starts the temperature recorder once all three baskets are placed in the tank and will turn the printer off when the first basket is removed from the tank. They also made other physical modifications of the secured work area. During a second visit by APHIS experts, the certification tests were successful, and the facility was certified on June 4, 2005. The DR Director of Plant Health (Sanidad Vegetal (SV)) and five others from SEA/SV headquarters as well as the local inspector were also present.

[14.](#) The APHIS TDY Officer assisted with the tests and started working with the SEA inspectors and facility to supervise the treatments of mangoes (from certified growers) to the United States the following week. As of June 18, 55,701 kg have been shipped.

Background on Preclearance Programs

[15.](#) Hot Water Treatment (HWT) is approved for mangoes from certain countries in the Caribbean, Central and South America, and Mexico, where certain fruit flies occur. Since the regulations require treatment in the country of origin with APHIS supervision, export of mangoes from these countries to the United States requires a PC Program. The first step is a formal request from the Ministry of Agriculture. Before starting a PC program, the government or industry group must provide information to APHIS such as the product(s) to be shipped, volume, season, ports of exit and entry, treatment facility sites, location and number of packers/exporters, frequency of shipments, and safeguards. The Preclearance Advisory Group (PAG) at APHIS headquarters evaluates this information, to see if the volume justifies a program and whether personnel are available to staff the program. The Department of Plant Health must also commit to active participation in the program.

[16.](#) If the PAG approves the proposal, a Work Plan needs to be written and a cooperator identified, who will pay for all costs in advance. Only one cooperator may be identified for

each commodity/group per country. This cooperator can be a government entity, exporters group or association. An average cost for preclearance programs with temporary duty officers is \$5,000 per week. Because mangoes are a fruitfly host, a trapping and cutting program in the growing areas must be incorporated into the Work Plan. In addition, plans for treatment facilities normally need to be reviewed and approved by APHIS prior to construction.

Background on Dominican Interest in Exporting Mangoes

17. SEA, exporters and other interested parties had asked APHIS for information regarding exports of mangoes to the United States numerous times prior to and since the arrival of the current APHIS Area Director in 2000, but never took any action, nor made a formal request for a Mango Preclearance Program based on the information provided (numerous times). In 2003, a businessman in Moca, Antonio Taveras built a treatment facility, and then asked APHIS to certify it. The APHIS Area Director explained the process that must be followed before any mangoes could be exported from the Dominican Republic to the United States and referred him to the Subsecretary of Planning, SEA who could make a formal request. Since the facility had already been built, the plans could not be submitted for approval in advance; however, they were submitted after SEA made a formal request for preclearance. Modifications were needed to meet the APHIS standards based upon the blueprints provided.

18. In January 2004, the PAG approved a Mango Preclearance Program for the Dominican Republic. Mr. Taveras (the cooperator) set up a trust fund, APHIS wrote a Work Plan (which was signed by SEA and the cooperator), and SEA started a trapping program in the mango areas. However, the facility had mechanical difficulties with the treatment tank and was not able to achieve the two successful trials required prior to a visit of the APHIS treatment experts before the season was mostly over. The cooperator decided to wait until 2005 to try again.

Links to CAFTA

19. The Dominican Republic signed the free trade agreement with the United States and Central America (CAFTA) in August, 2004. One of their issues was access for mangoes to the United States. This has now been accomplished via the Preclearance Program. One of the CAFTA trade capacity building activities was Fruit Fly Trapper Training, which had USAID logistical support and APHIS instructors and content. Although originally planned for 30, the final participant tally was 42 from SEA, Instituto Dominicano de Investigaciones Agropecuarias y Forestales (Government Agricultural Research), Universidad Autonoma de Santo Domingo, Junta Agroempresarial Dominicana (Agricultural Exporters Association) and industry. The training allowed the SEA to meet their obligation to certify growers as Low Fruit Fly Prevalence Areas prior to being able to sell fruit for HWT under the Preclearance Program.

Secretary Visit to Mango Facility

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10. On June 10, Secretary of Agriculture Amilcar Romero made a technical visit to the mango facility. He was shown the process by the plant owner, from arrival of the fruit, to the cutting (with explanation by the local inspector), placement of the cages in the tank, tour of the control booth, explanations of the recording device, sensors, etc, packing and stamping the boxes in the screen room, and loading the air cargo igloo. The APHIS AD Cohen pointed out the safeguards (fans, screens, etc). APHIS TDY Officer Garcia showed the forms used, stamping of the boxes, placement of the notice on the igloos, and placement of the APHIS seals. AD Cohen and APHIS Agricultural Scientist Paula Morales spoke with Secretary Romero about the need for SEA to explain to Dominican Customs and Drug Agencies that they should not break any APHIS seals, except with the APHIS TDY present, or the treatment would be invalidated. APHIS would need to supervise the opening of the seals to ensure the phytosanitary integrity was kept, to place new seals after the inspections and issue new certificates. They also spoke about the trapping program and determination of Low Fruit Fly Prevalence Areas.

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